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# SITUATION IN EAST TIMOR IS IMPROVING

Mgr. Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo (36) has given eye-witness observations of today's East Timor. In an interview with a group of Jakarta senior editors, including Mr. Sabam Siagian (the Jakarta Post), the Apostolic Administrator in Dili said : " We are part of Indonesia now, that's a reality we are now living. The situation is gradually improving". He was met by the journalists in Walili, a village nine, South of Bacau in East Timor, last monday, after giving on open air church service. Mgr. Belo returned to East Timor in 1981 after completing his theological studies in Lisbon and Rome. Folowing are excerpts of the interview :

Q : What are your main impressions after three years residing in your home area ?

A : I work for the church, I'm doing pastoral work. There are 36 pastors now working in the Roman Catholic Church of East Timor, 19 of them come from outside the area. As I see it, the situation is gradually improving. There are no major problems in this area but there are some shortcomings in some fields. The government is working hard to speed up development and provide basic facilities for the people (public health, education, roads and bridges, clean water).

Q : What are some of the shortcomings you refer to ?

A : Well, development encompasses many aspects of human life, not only the material aspect. First of all, the people here must feel that they are part of development. They must have a sense of participation in various programs which in the final analysis are launched to improve the people's social welfare. What I also consider as important is to create a sense of tranquility among the people. In some areas where security conditions are practically normal, I think restrictions of

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movements could be lifted. As a matter of fact, development and social economic conditions could well be enhanced in those safe areas when people are able to sell their produce in the local markets, look up their relative and benefit from the improved social facilities.

Q : What about the unsafe areas, Monsignor ?

A : Yes, the recent activities of the Fretilin remnants are of great concern to me. They now resort to some brutal practices like burning villages, rice and maize fields and even killing their fellow Timorese. Perhaps they like to provoke the security units to retaliate and worsen the situation. These practices are wrong, I can not condone them. I stated that already. Terror tactics like burning, looting and killing would not help the efforts of reconcialliation among East Timorese people.

Q : Have you stated your position either through public statements or by delivering sermons to that effect ? Or perhaps, have you conveyed your position condeming those brutal tactics to those Fretilin remnants ?

A : No, I havent's done so. But everybody knows my position. I'm the servant of the Church, how can I agree to those practices ?

Q : You were quoted in some foreign publications as being very critical to some aspects of the current situation in East Timor. A letter supposedly written by you which touched upon some critical aspects here was recently published. Could you comment on that ?

A : You know, sometimes I do not understand the mind of journalists like you here (laughter). I think I've been misquoted or different interpretations are applied to my statements. Some quarters even talked or wrote on my behalf. Or I was quoted out of context of the whole interviews as I was over concerned on one particular aspects only. Well, I'm more careful now since I realize my inadequate experience with the international press. Let us take one case. Some parts of my

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personal letter addressed to my predecessor, Mgr. Martinhu da Costa Lopes who is now residing in Lisbon were released publicly. I was very surprised when I heard that happened. That letter was not meant to be released as a public statement. It was a piece of communication from one servant of the Church to another fellow servant. Besides, the main elements of the letter were not unknown to the Indonesian authorities. That letter was dated February 16, 1984. On February 15, I visited the area Commander Brigadier Jenderal Soetarto at his residence in Denpasar (Bali) accompanied by four pastors. I conveyed to him my observations concerning the situation in East Timor which I also wrote in that personal letter. I often do that, talking to government and military authorities, sharing with them my observations and perhaps making some suggestions. After all, I consider it as part of my clerical responsibility to work positively with the government for the interest of the East Timorese people.

Q : To sum it up, Monsignor, how do you see the immediate future ?

A : I hope and I pray that there will be reconciliation and complete peace in East Timor. It is important to create a situation of tranquility and to improve the social economic conditions. I always convey to the members of the Church, let us work together for our common future. We are part of Indonesia now, that's a reality we are now living.